

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

February 15, 2024, Rm 155, City Hall

Present Members: Kameron Perez-Verdia (Assembly), Anna Brawley (Assembly), Jennifer Veneklasen (Assembly staff), Trevor Storrs (Alaska Children's Trust), Jen Griffis (Alaska Children's Trust), Kim Rash (Anchorage Health Department), Dawn Skeete (Anchorage Health Department), Melinda Myers (thread), Jade Hayden (Hmoob Cultural Center of Alaska), Branwen Collier (Early Learning for Everyone), Nora Matell (parent), Jessica Simonsen (parent), Heather Weafer (Child and Youth Programs, U.S. Air Force), Kathleen McArdle (Anchorage Chamber)

Absent Members: Kevin Cross (Assembly), Carl Jacobs (ASD – School Board), Eric Croft (volunteer; campaign team), Ivy Spohnholz (volunteer; campaign team), Katrina Ahlfield (Kids' Corps., Inc.), Ethan Petticrew (Cook Inlet Native Head Start)

Staff: Austin Quinn-Davidson

Guests: Wesley Early, APRN

Notes:

- I. Finalize Agenda
- II. Updates
 - a. Governor's Task Force – Heather Weafer
 - i. Task Force has recently been focusing on quality of child care and had a great presentation on Learn & Grow last month.
 - ii. Mostly meeting virtually (monthly), but in April will meet in person
 - b. Legislative Update – Jen Griffis
 - i. The Alaska Early Childhood Advocacy Group was recently advocating in Juneau. They met with legislators, including to discuss HB89 (Rep. Julie Coulombe). This bill could be on the House floor for a vote as soon as next week. It would (1) increase the amount of families that are eligible for child care assistance (from 85% of state median income to 105%), (2) change the cost of care to market rate, and (3) provide tax credits to businesses providing child care. It comes with a \$6.1M fiscal note.
 - ii. Anna Brawley offered that if useful, perhaps the Assembly could consider passing a resolution in support.
- III. Communications & Engagement – Austin Quinn-Davidson
 - a. Austin presented on recent and upcoming engagement, including: six events for parents and providers; Make it Monday presentation; FCC and AECC presentations; survey (over 200 responses already) – deadline is March 8; meetings with individuals and groups of providers; communication with elected officials and others; responses to public inquiries; and more. Communications efforts include radio ads; Facebook and other social media posts; website

content; opinion piece written by parent members of IT; FCC email going out soon; podcast opportunities; fliers distributed to churches, community groups, diaper pantries, elementary schools, providers, hospitals, birth centers, library, Sol de Medianoche, Muni Equity Committee, Ninestar, and others.

b. Reminder to take the survey!

IV. Discussion of Approach to Strategic Implementation of ACCEE Fund – Trevor Storrs

a. Trevor presented a strategic framework document. The document laid out a plan and timeline for creation of IT recommendations for the Accountability Board. Trevor reminded IT members that their role is to produce strategic recommendations and provide a decision-making structure for the Accountability Board. The small strategy group (Anna Brawley, Jessica Simonsen, Jen Griffis, Austin Quinn-Davidson, and Trevor Storrs) will produce a matrix for evaluation of different funding options at the April meeting. Discussion will begin then and carry into the May and June meetings, at which time a product for the Accountability Board will be produced.

b. Trevor shared that the IT will also begin discussing the Accountability Board ordinance at next month's IT meeting, and will finalize it at the April meeting.

V. Presentation by Robert Barr (Deputy City Manager, City and Borough of Juneau) & Blue Shibler (Executive Director, Association for the Education of Young Children - Southeast): City & Borough of Juneau Child Care Program

a. The Juneau program began in 2018. It is available to licenced providers and costs \$2.3M annually (\$1.3M funded by property and sales tax and \$1M Innovation Grant). The program includes subsidies and more recently, an apprenticeship program. It has been a very successful program – even throughout the pandemic, Juneau did not see child care business closures. The program serves 265 children annually, and 70 providers receive stipends. Robert Barr noted that because State-funded child care assistance does not pay the actual market cost of care, the stipends the City & Borough of Juneau (CBJ) provides tend to cover that gap and are needed to keep child care businesses operating. Robert and Blue receive regular feedback from providers stating that without the CBJ program, they'd be closed by now. If awarding subsidies, they don't recommend putting many parameters on what they can be used for (for instance, they don't require a particular level of Learn & Grow, rather just require participation). Their belief is that employers will inevitably use them for wages. Blue Shibler noted that they have had a lot of interest lately from potential new in-home providers. Robert Barr noted that having a third party administer and distribute the funding has been very helpful; AEYC has established relationships that make administration easier and more positive for grantees. Robert Barr recommended keeping our programs and grants as simple as possible, and noted that quality comes naturally when you make meaningful investments.

VI. Presentation by Heather Weafer (Flight Chief, Child and Youth Programs, JBER; Implementation Team member): JBER Program Successes

a. 65% of funding for this program comes from the federal government. The remaining 35% is mostly collected from parents, and they use a sliding scale to determine the monthly payment per child. The most a parent will pay per child is \$700/month. Entry level pay for providers is \$18.67 an hour. Employees also get benefits (paid holidays, annual leave, sick leave, health care, retirement, training, tuition assistance for children, etc.). Providers get free child care for their first child as part of their employment package, with other discounts for additional children. 45% of staff have one or more child in JBER centers. The cost to JBER to operate this program is \$137,000 quarterly. JBER also pays for accreditation and start-up equipment – cribs, etc.

Heather reported that they do everything they can to make the start-up cost nothing, or very close to nothing. They have 11 pending applicants for new programs.

- b. Heather guessed that if they stopped providing free care for providers' kids, they would lose 65 of the 75 staff who use this program. It is incredibly popular. They started this program in 2022 and since then their staff vacancy rate has dropped by 10%.
- c. Jade Hayden noted that her center also provides free child care for providers' children and that it is very popular. Branwen Collier stated that her center provides a 40% discount for care for children of providers. While these programs can be very successful, Branwen noted that there are some logistics to consider, like making sure that there are spots for providers' kids and that they're a good fit for the center.

VII. Closing Comments by Members

- a. Anna Brawley stated that she and Kameron Perez-Verdia would like to meet via Teams ONLY from now on. It is easier for many members and makes it easier to see everyone. There was no objection from members.